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*The Sins which withhold good
& Things from us:*

Or, the Chief

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MISCARRIAGES

England OF OUR

CHURCH and NATION.

IN A

SERMON

Preached on the Fast-Day,
January 14. 1708.

By a Minister of the Church of England.

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy Voice like a Trumpet, and shew my People their Transgression, and the House of Jacob their Sins, Isaiah 58. 1.

L O N D O N,

Printed and Sold by Joseph Downing in Bartholomew-Close near West-Smithfield, 1708.

READER,

THE Copy of this Sermon being sent to a Friend of the Author's, who ingenuously told him, it cost more Pains to transcribe it Fair than to Pen it: 'tis now by his Friend Published, out of mere faithfulness to the Church and Nation in our present Circumstance: 'Tis hop'd that so Serious, Natural, and Plain and Easy a Discourse, mixed with so due a Temper of Prudence and Zeal, and yet with Candor; may, through the Power of God's Holy Spirit accompanying the Sincere Endeavours of the Reader, contribute, in its Place, to the Preserving the Church and Nation from the present Danger that threatneth it. If a general Reformation, an unfeigned Repentance, and future Holy Obedience, shall by this sudden and terrible Appearance of an approaching Judgment, be raised up amongst us, this black Cloud will be blown away, and we secured from a French and Popish Tyranny. Which God grant for his infinite Mercy in Christ.



Isaiah

Isaiah 59. Ver. 1, 2.

Behold the Lord's Hand is not shortned that it cannot Save; neither his Ear heavy that it cannot hear: But your Iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your Sins have hid his Face from you that he will not hear.

AS the Occasion we are met upon is Solemn, so I shall endeavour to speak with the greatest plainness and seriousness upon it. And in order hereunto, the Words that I have chosen, cannot be thought unsuitable to the present Season. I could heartily wish that they were far less seasonable than they are.

It hath been abundantly evident, what Mercies and Victories God hath blessed us with; and what hopes we had of Reaping the farther Benefit and Advantages of them. We were in great Hopes (and there seem'd to be no small Foundation for them) by this Years War, through the Assistance of God, to have brought matters within the Prospect of a safe and honourable Peace. But God hath not answered our Hopes and Expectations in this matter. The Year hath in several respects prov'd but disadvantageous and prosperous to us; and yet mercifully mix'd with some Advantages and Successes in the Course of it. God hath shewn us hereby, not to be too secure in the Days of Prosperity: Especially to have a Care of Presuming on his Goodness, notwithstanding the continuance of our Iniquities in his sight. He hath taught us to be more thankful for, and less impenitent under the great Things that He hath done for us; to be more sensible of both his Mercies and Judgments together; and to be wrought upon by the one or the other of them, or at least, by both, to the Emendation of our Ways before him. He shews otherwise, what he both can and will do with us; and that if we expect to be a happy and settled People, we must become a more Religious and Reformed People. He will not deliver us that we may the more securely go on in our Sins; enjoy our Sloth and our Lusts; and say even to his Face, as it were, *We are deliver'd so do all these Abominations*, Jer. 7. 10.

Nothing can more provoke God than Ingratitude, and Unfruitfulness under the greatest Mercies that he can work for us; such as have astonish'd both our Selves, our Friends and Enemies; and which the rest of the World have look'd upon with Amazement. 'Tis a horrid Provocation to Sin blindly or presumptuously against the *Judgments* of God: And I know not if it be not as great or greater, to do it against a Course of his *Goodness* and *Mercies*.

Seek we then for a Cause of our late Losses or Disappointments? We need not surely go far for it. Hath *Israel* fled from before the Enemy, or received other Evils or Damages? Upon the least Enquiry, it will immediately be found, that *Israel* hath sinned: Nay, sinned even under the greatest Mercies and Deliverances of God: Nay, and what is worse still, so far as appears, is resolved to do so. We seem to take little notice of these Things with respect to the Error or Iniquity of our Ways. Neither the *Judgments* of God have driven, nor his *Goodness* led us to *Repentance*. Come one, or come the other, we remain the same People; as if after the sending out our Fleets and Forces, we were little more concerned in it; And there was no *Sin* to be repented of or amended; no inward, serious, and private Applications to be made to God, or Christian Consideration of our own Ways required from us. 'Tis enough in a way of Form, to observe a publick Day appointed, and that but very lamely too, and many of us not at all; and then without more to do, or without farther Thought as to any of our Lives, or the amending of our Doings, wait and expect the Issue of Things. It seems 'tis here true, What is every Body's Work, as we say, is no Body's; and Sin, however common or manifest, is the least thing that troubles us; we are well as to that, and in Point of Piety and Obedience, if God, or Chance, will but favour and assist us. If we are prosper'd, we are indeed better pleased and contented; but make not any spiritual Use of it: If Disappointments or Adversity come, we are fretted and displeased, we are apt to murmur and to doubt, to blame presently Men, and outward Instruments, or almost accuse God, and question his Providence, but scarce ever think of our *shortnesses*, and *neglects* of our *Vices* and *Miscarriages*, that are the truest Cause of it.

And if you will not believe *me*, yet at least believe the Word of God; for this is that which we have evidently in the Text.

Behold the Lord's Hand is not shortened that it cannot save: His Power and his Providence is the same as ever. It is Universal, Everlasting, and Undiminishable, let things appear as they will, as if they were governed by blind Chance: There

is nothing comes to pass without the Counsel or Permission of God; who Rules in and disposeth of all Nations, and prospers or not prospers them according to his own Will. *The Lord's Hand is at no time shortned that it cannot Save, neither his Ear heavy that it cannot Hear.* They might think that he *heard* not their formal Supplications unto him; or question his Attending to their concerns and desires; that he dealt hardly with them, heard or regarded them not. But alas, the *Ears* and the *Eyes* of God are ever *both* open to observe and behold the *Sayings* or the *Doings* of the Children of Men. The entire Universe lies, as it were, in him; and there is no part of it that *can* be hid or concealed from his Sight. *Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy Presence?* Psal. 139. 7. *In whom we live, and move, and have our Being,* Acts 17. 28. There can be no Distraction or Imperfection in an Infinite Mind. His *Hand* can neither be *shortned to save*, nor his *Ear* at any time *heavy*, weary, or too much employed to *hear*. But the true Account of the matter doth therefore here immediately follow.

But your Iniquities have separated between you and your God: These, as it were, have cast up a Wall or Bank between you: *And your Sins have hid his Face from you,* (or as it is in the Margin, *have made him hide his Face from you*) *that he will not hear.* It is not that he *cannot*, but your Lives are such, your Vices and Defects, that they cause him in Anger and Displeasure to turn away his Eyes and Ears from you.

This was the Case of the then Jews; and a very sad Account follows of their State and Iniquities; and such in some regards, as is not, it is hop'd, applicable to our selves: Though even Duels, Murders, and so *Blood* it self, are not wanting amongst us. But many Particulars are but too too apparent amongst us: I speak as we are a Nation, and with respect for great Numbers, to the publick State and Appearance of it.

The Way of Peace they know not; and there is no Judgment, or true Righteousness, in their goings: They have made them crooked Paths, some one way and some another, *whosoever goeth therein shall not know Peace,* ver. 8. Upon which it again follows in suitability to the Text, *therefore is Judgment far from us; neither doth Justice overtake us:* the meaning is here the *Judgment* & the *Justice* of God manifested on our behalf against our Enemies, or by sending us Prosperity as we hop'd and expected: But these things were far from them by reason of their Evil and *Crooked Paths*; and because they walked not in the Paths of Righteousness. And therefore it farther follows, *We wait for Light, but behold Obscurity; for Brightness, but we walk in Darkness.* That is, we hop'd for Hap-

pinels, and waited for Success, the continuance or encrease of it ; but behold Darknefs and Disappointment, and a contrary Event, is happen'd unto us. *We grope for the Wall like the Blind* ; even the *Wall* or Tower of Peace, Safety, Victory, and Prosperity : To apply the Words for our own use and benefit ; *And we grope as if we had no Eyes* ; to discern our Sins and our Failings, the Cause of our misfortunes, and to see to remedy them. The State is Blind, dark and uncomfortable. *We stumble at Noon, day as in the Night, we are in desolate Places*, in dark and intricate Places, as *dead Men*, i. e. as such who from their difficult and perplex'd Circumstances fear much mischief and danger to themselves, v. 10.

It follows still, with regard to the Jews, more deeply and tragically ; “ we roar all like Bears, and we mourn sore like Doves : This also in a measure is our own Case ; tho’ thanks be to God, not to the pitch that some would have it, *We look for Judgment, but there is none : for the Judgments again of God to appear in our behalf, but we find it not ; for Salvation, but it is far off from us. And now the Reason again follows of this Adversity and Misery, this defeat in their Hopes and Expectations. For our Transgressions are multiplied before thee ; and our sins testify against us : for our Transgressions are with us, and as for our Iniquities, we know them*, ver. 13. which is but all still suitable to the words at first read. *Behold, the Lord’s Hand is not shortened, that it cannot save ; neither his Ear heavy that it cannot hear. But your Iniquities have separated as a dark, dead Wall, between you and your God : and your Sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*

And these are the Words, and this the Place, that I have chosen this day to Discourse to you on : and I hope you are sufficiently sensible of the too great seasonableness and Applicableness of them. I will not treat nicely of the words of the Text : but the remainder of my Business shall be,

I. To lay before you in short, the chief of those Sins and Provocations which abound at this day in this our own Nation : and which I take to be the main Wall of Separation between Us and our God ; or the Cause why he stops his Ears, and hides his Face from us that he will not hear. And,

II. To press what I can briefly the Amendment of them. And,

I. If ever such an Account or Catalogue as this is seasonable and necessary, it is on such a Time and Occasion as this : and as I hope you will attend to it, as I go along ; so I doubt you will find but too much evidence in the Course of such Miscarriages as I shall mention to you. They are not, God knows,
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committed in Corners. They are not the *private* Frailties, or Infirmities, but the more open Iniquities of our Church and Nation. And I would to God we could as easily perswade Men to the Amendment of them, to become truly Wise, Sober, and Religious, as 'tis easie to point them out unto them; and as they will certainly wish some time or other, that they had *been and done* with regard to them.

First then, may I not well mention the *Atheism* or *Infidelity* there is in the Land? their either no Belief in the Being of a God, or in the Truth and Sacredness of the *Christian* Religion. And are there not many, do we think, of this sort up and down in the Nation? Not that I think it possible for any Persons wholly to extinguish the Sense and Apprehension of these in themselves. One of the greatest of the Tribe, when time was, professed solemnly in the End, *that he had never known a perfect Atheist in his Life*. But the meaning is, there are too many amongst us, that so far as they well *dare* or *can* pretend to this pitch of Wickedness and Impiety; and are ready upon occasion to make a *Mock* of *Sin*, and to flout at the Name of God and Religion. They have attained at length, so far as Nature admits, to a perfection of Blindness and of Unbelief; and have got with much Pride, and Contempt of others, and so also of Prophaness towards God, into the *Seat of the Scornful*. But,

Secondly, Where there is not this secret or barefac'd Contempt of Religion, or denial of the fundamental Principles of it; there is yet often, and too too visibly and unhappily, a Deadness or Coldness in the Duties of it: A Carelessness and Neglect, a Flatness or Formality in the plain Ways and Precepts of the Gospel. If they are not very wicked, or unbelieving, yet they cannot be said to be Religious, or Pious. They want Zeal and Life, they want Fervour and Devotion for it: A concern for the Honour of God and their Redeemer; for the Duties of Righteousness; and against the Vices and Disorders of the Times. They are little rais'd, little *quickned* or awaken'd, by all that can be offer'd or said to them: as if they were in a full Christian State; or it was needless at least to be concern'd farther, or enliven'd in it. Though they are not, I say, very vicious, or Atheistical, yet they cannot be said to be living and true Christians. But,

Thirdly, A great Number are not content to be this, but are openly and apparently loose or irregular: guilty more particularly of some or more of the Vices mention'd in the *Proclamation*; those too too common, and publick Scandal of our Church and Nation: Such as *Drunkennes* or *excessive Drinking*, which howsoever rare and odious heretofore, is be-

come now the common Vice of the Nation. *Blasphemy*, or speaking scoffingly and reproachfully of God or Religion. *Prophane Swearing and Cursing*; so frequently and offensively, notwithstanding the late Act so often read, in the Mouths of Men, Women and Children. *Leudness*, or Uncleanneſs; ſuch as frequent Adulteries and Fornications; and thoſe alſo amongſt many known and avow'd. Nay, *Sodomy* it ſelf, that deteſtable Foulneſs, hath with much vileneſs been practis'd and detected of late amongſt us; and which, if not ſtop'd, will prove a *judicial Sin*, and *Defile the Land*. *Prophanation of the Lords Day*; with a neglect of the publick Duties of Religion; the Prayers, Offices, and Ordinances of the Church; and this, notwithstanding the ſacredneſs of theſe things; that the Honour, Worſhip, and Authority of God is ſo much concern'd in them; the Order of a Chriſtian Church, and the Welfare and Edification of the Souls of Men. *With other Diſſolute, immoral, and Diſorderly Practices*: ſuch as Rudeneſs, Riots, Quarrels, Fightings, Night-Walkings, Villany, Robbery, Obſcenity, and the like.

Every one knows how frequent and publick theſe ſo groſs vices and offences are; but eſpecially the greateſt part of them; and this, notwithstanding all that can be ſaid or done to ſtop the Courſe of them; and this in a Nation again profeſſin themſelves Chriſtians, and Diſciples of the Goſpel. If God muſt not be Mock'd, Prophan'd, and Provok'd, and that in a high meaſure, by ſuch Practices as theſe, by the either Loofeneſs or Coldneſs of Profeſſors; let the Conſcience here of every Perſon ſpeak and judge. And yet this is the Church, and we the Nation, that expect the continued Bleſſings and Protection of God. I will not inſiſt,

Fourthly, Upon the Pride and Stomach, the Envy and Selfiſhneſs, the Strife and Malice, the Covetouſneſs or Worldly-mindedneſs, the Injuſtice and Oppreſſion, the Uncharitableneſs and Revenge, the Cruelty and the Hard heartedneſs, the Frauds, Calumnies, Brawlings and Back-bitings, with other endleſs Miſchiefs, and unchriſtian Diſorders of one kind or other, there are amongſt us: they are better hinted and conceiv'd, than more largely deſcrib'd. They are too much known, and felt too, in all Parts of the Nation. And in particular, I ſhall paſs over with a ſhort Hint the high Paſſions, Machinations, and Ambitions, there are often amongſt the great Men of the Earth; to ſay nothing of their Examples in ſome other reſpects, with the moſt miſchievous Effects and Conſequences of them: all moſt wonderfully contrary, with the Evils beforementioned, to the Prudence and Integrity, the Meekneſs and Simplicity of the Goſpel of Chriſt.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, How few lay to Heart this unhappy State of the Church and Kingdom; are concerned seriously for either their own Errors, or those of others; that look up heartily unto God, praying for the Redress or Reformation of them; that join sincerely with the *Petitions, Humiliations, and Confessions*, that are contain'd and offer'd up in our Publick Devotions; and how much less still do they concern themselves with *Private* ones; or with any real Intentions, and cordial Resolutions, of amending any Evils for the time to come? How few prepare themselves by any sort of Christian and retir'd Thoughts upon these *Days of Fasting and Humiliation*? nay, so much comparatively as observe the very *Order of Fasting* from a Meal: so far are they from making any great account of the Day, or of their Sins, or of their being humbled and afflicted for them. How little do they heed the State and Condition of the Church or Realm, any farther than their own Wants are concerned in it? And how little do they truly look up to God, as the assured Orderer and Disposer of all things? and with a sincere Sense that our Losses or Disappointments are most justly owing to our Incurigibleness and Iniquity? and that things would be better with us, if we were so our selves? But instead of this, all is formal and customary, that is, 'tis so with many; nay, perhaps slighted and ridicul'd; and the keeping of a solemn unfeigned *Fast*, and Day of *Humiliation*, is the least thing regarded or thought of by us. And what is this but too much the State and Posture of the Jews in the First of *Isaiah*; which I must leave you to peruse at your proper leisure.

Sixthly, It is very evident how much the Nation hath persevered in a Course of Wickedness and Sin, in opposition to all the either publick or private Methods that have been used against it. What *Proclamations* have we had in this, and the last Reign, to speak of no other things, for the *Preventing and Punishing Immorality and Prophaness*? What Orders of *Justices* in conformity to them? And what Sermons and Discourses to second and enforce them? How have they been appointed to be publickly Read at all Assizes and Sessions; in all Churches and Chappels? And all Persons concerned, Magistrates and others, required to take special Notice of them.

What *Societies* have there been both in City and Country, and especially in the former, to promote the Execution of wholesome Laws, in order to the Answering of the great Designs of them? But with all their Progress and great Successes, what Oppositions have they met with from a loose and a wicked World? As if the Instruments of Satan, and the Children of
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the dark Kingdom, had done their utmost to oppose the Patrons of Virtue, and the *Children of Light*: When yet they only endeavour to see the Laws, both of God and Man, against notorious Vice kept and executed in a Christian Nation, that hath received the One solemnly and religiously, and hath made the Other. But thus do many *Hate to be reformed, and cast the Words of God behind them.*

Add to this the other Noble and *Religious Societies* which there are in the Nation; and by whose means, and others that have bought them, many Thousands of little Practical and good Books, of all sorts, have been printed and dispersed; in order to suppress Vice, and revive the true Spirit of Religion in the World. So that never since the Reformation, and perhaps the Primitive times, however neglected or oppos'd, were there greater Means used for a sincere Piety and Reformation in the Church, than at this very day. And doubtless if we are not amended by them, they will partly at present, but much more hereafter, be in a way of Judgment visited upon us. And ill will be the Reckoning of those Persons that in such a resolute and gigantick manner have set themselves presumptuously against them: As 'tis no small Sign of a deplorable Condition of that Kingdom, and somewhat like the Old World, when they not only Sin, but both hate and trample upon the Means of Reforming it.

Seventhly, The *Play Houses* which we have, as they are order'd and manag'd, are infamous and scandalous Nurseries of Prophaness and Debauchery; *Drains*, as it were, of Vice, and *Forts* of Satan, and of Irreligion; *Temples* of Impiety, and Chappels of Lust, Vanity, and Corruption. And yet these are those that are so much haunted and applauded by great Numbers in a Nation of *Christians*, though they have renounced the Devil and all his Works; the *Pomps and Vanities*, in such an apparent evil and corrupting Way, of this wicked World: And have Lifted themselves under the Banner of the Cross; and the Maintenance of God's true Religion and Virtue; and not sure therefore, as many with a high Hand, for the Maintenance and support of Lewd *Brothel Houses*, or deprav'd *Play Houses*.

Eighthly, I may add to these, the Contempt and Reproach that is often cast upon the *Ministers* of Religion, and on things Sacred, whether deservedly or not; the Injustice and disrespect they are oft treated with; the Exposing them if Bad, and not much regarding or following their Doctrine if they be better. If Ministers are Vicious, or in any respect or course of Life give a just Scandal, undoubtedly it is matter of the Highest Censure and Reproach: But then, this should be exercised with a pious
Blame

Blame and Offence; with a godly Zeal and Concern; and not with an Ungracious and Ungodly Pleasure, Insulting, or Rebuke, mindless of the Holy Order in general; and that they are assuredly the Officers and Embassadors of God. But too true it is, and plain to be denied, that some *Ministers* as well as *People* are not such as they ought to be; and they would do well seriously, and in much earnest, to consider of it.

Ninthly, The *Heresies*, and *corrupt Doctrines*, the *Factions* and *Schisms* there are amongst us, ought seriously to be considered and lamented by us; the evil Books and Writings that are Publish'd, with the impious and irreligious Tenets that are propagated in them: The Divisions upon Divisions, and Separations upon Separations, there are from our excellent and Establish'd Church, and from one another; but more particularly still, the ill Feuds and uncharitable Breaches that are got into the Church it self; the Sidings and Contendings upon small or no Grounds; the Nick Names of Distinction and Reproach which abound in the Land; both Unchristian in themselves, and of dangerous consequence to our Church and Kingdom. These and the like Evils, call aloud for Amendment and Reformation, and for a more Wise, Christian, and Charitable Conversation and Disposition in the Realm. Our God hath declared himself to be a *God of Peace*, Unity, and Order: If we are thus *Factionous* and *Divided*, we cannot hope reasonably for the Blessing of God upon Uncharitableness and Confusion; or yet upon the undue Encouragement of loose and licentious Principles.

I know not whether I may not here mention, the Prostituting of Religion to base and unworthy Ends; the taking up Hypocritical Masques of it for the answering of our worldly and carnal Interests: which wherever it is found, must be own'd to be a great Abomination; and so any gross or wilful Abuses of our holy Profession. But I briefly proceed to what Remains.

Tenthly, For I must repeat it, how few, in a serious and religious way, have receiv'd the *Victories* and *Glories* that God hath blessed us with; or that have in a like manner, and from a Sense of the best Fruits and Advantages of them, rendred him true Praise and Honour for the same; and especially that have shewn it by any Christian improvement or Emendation of their Lives. Doth there not rather a Spirit of Levity and Vanity, a Spirit of Unweighedness and Inconsideration, a heedless Spirit of Unthankfulness and Unfruitfulness, prevail in the Minds of most Persons, Old and Young, in these matters: While in too great a measure we are destitute of the Spirit of *Faith* and *Power*, of *Love*, and of a *sound Mind*, 2 Tim. 1. 7.

To which may be justly added, (not speaking any thing against proper Cloathing or Ornament) the Excesses of the Mind with respect to Finery and Fashions, the Doating earnestly upon them, and the being Lovers of Pleasures and our own unwarrantable Humours, more than of God, or all the Glory and Righteousness of his Eternal Kingdom.

Eleventhly, Let me here particularly next take notice of the *Sad* sinful State, and grievous Disorders in our Fleets and Armies. But I'll give you this, if I may be allow'd to do it, rather in the Words or Sense of another, than in my own; 'If, saith he, we look into our Armies and Camps, and especially into our Fleets, I must own to you, 'tis a Wonder to me Heaven should suffer Winds to blow for them, or Ships to swim under them, or Shot to flie for them; that he is not moved by the horrid Oaths, Cursings, Ravings and Blasphemings, (and he might have added other Vices) to discharge Nature from obeying her Course with them; and make the Air and Elements to *fight against them*. And again, I never expect to see us a Conquering, Victorious, Successful People, till we are a Praying, Humbled and Reformed People. Once more, would you know, *saith he*, why you lost the Battle at *Almanza*, and the Ships at *Scilly*, and have suffered other Evils and Disappointments? Your Selves and Armies have greatly sinned. There's the Reason. Get ye up then, and remove these accursed Things, the Debaucheries and Prophaneness, the horrid Oaths and Blasphemies, both of Army and Fleet: How should you look Enemies in the Face, (at least, he might have said, *how should you look up to God for Assistance*) with these abominable things amongst you.

Twelfthly and *Lastly*, How few lay to Heart the sincere Interests of the Protestant Religion; the Danger it may be in; or the Sufferings of our Brethren in so many Places, more or less beyond the Seas? Who is much afflicted, I speak in comparison of the greater part, for these Afflictions of *Joseph*? Or that relish sufficiently the difference between the Protestant and the Popish Religion; that have this mainly at Heart; that bless God continually for the Means and Purity of it; and Pray as heartily for its Prosperity and Enlargement in the World: That Sympathize with its Professors wherever they are, in Goals, Gallies, Dungeons, or Deserts; and look upon it as Light and God's eternal Truth, largely speaking in opposition to the Darkness and Corruptions of *Romanism*. And unless we do this Vitally and Understandingly, how should we expect that God should prosper always, or defend that Religion, which our Selves do not wonderfully Value or Regard; and take still less care for the Forming of our Lives
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according to it: if we are much more concern'd for things Temporal than Things Spiritual; and would be prosper'd and establish'd chiefly to enjoy those, together with our other Abominations.

And thus have I now given you but an over-full and plain Account of those *Iniquities* or *Defects*, of all Sorts, that *separate between us and our God*; those *Sins* or *Miscarriages* that make him to *hide his face from us that he will not hear*. I am now in the Second Place,

II. To Press briefly the Amendment of them.

All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God. And all is also written for our present Use and Admonition: And is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, or Amendment, for Instruction in Righteousness, 2 Tim. 3. 16: Both Sin and Righteousness, Obedience and Disobedience, are the same, as to the main, in all Ages: And what is said here to the Jews, is applicable in like Circumstances, or in the case of Sin, to all Parts as well as all times of the Church of God. So that we see *plainly* here, and not *darkly*, as through a *Celestial Glass*, the cause of the Evils that fall upon us.

God hath often indeed various Ends to answer; and he causeth sometimes the better parts of his Church to be afflicted; but still 'tis for their Good and Benefit; and they will use it accordingly. But when we have such palpable Deadnesses or Provocations amongst us, we need not to look farther for our Chastisement or Afflictions. 'Tis rather a Miracle of God's Goodness that he should have done such great things for us as he hath done, than that he should have sent us the Evils we have met with. How should we expect indeed a compleat Blessing, or yet a continuance of Favours, without greater Piety and Amendment of Life? How should God Preserve or Prosper us in Sin? What his Goodness may do for the sake of the good, (the happy Numbers of whom we have great Reason thankfully to acknowledge:) for his *Names sake*, or for his *Truth's sake*, and so beyond our Deserts, I know not: But I am sure we have no Reason to expect it, but to fear justly the contrary Evils.

How contrary are our Vices to the Duties and Virtues of our Holy Religion? How plain, as to the main, are those Scandals and Iniquities of our Church and Nation, that have been laid before you? What an over-true and unhappy draught is it of the State and Posture of the Generality? What a Picture of the Nations Spiritual Condition? And how contrary is the greatest part of it, in a more especial manner, as to the Rules of the Gospel, so to the *standing Prayers*, *Confessions*,
and

and Supplications, that are offered up to God by us? And more particularly still to the Confessions, Humiliations, and solemn Deprecations, with respect to our Iniquities, on these Days.

How do we profess to bewail both our Personal and National Offences with a *deep* and *unfeigned* Humiliation? *How do we Pray* here for Repentance and Amendment of Life? For the removing that Unbelief, Prophaneſs and Immorality, by which we do ſo grievouſly offend God? *And to be receiv'd* and comforted, who are grieved and wearied with the Burden of our Sins. *How do we Confess* our Abufe of the Divine Goodneſs and Clemency? *And the* unſuitable returns that we have made for the Mercies, the ſignal Mercies, we have receiv'd; the great and Manifold Sins we have been guilty of; and the moſt juſt Provocations we have given God to be angry with us and to forſake us: *And how do we pray again* that we may no longer tempt and Provoke him by our Ingratitude and Diſobedienee? *And what a ſenſe do our Prayers often expreſs of the Nature and Danger of the Common Enemy?* And of the afflicted State of the Proteſtant Churches? With many things more that might be obſerv'd.

Now if we thus *Pray*, and *Confess*, from time to time, without any due ſenſe of the Matters uttered; or without the leaſt, as it were, ſtirring Hand or Foot to rectifie and amend any thing amiſs; but thus *Pray* continually, and *Sin* continually; what can this be but a *mocking* of God inſtead of truly fearing or ſerving him? What can we call it more than what the Scriptures call it, Formality and Hypocriſy? a mere empty Service and Worſhip; a *Wearineſs* to our Maker; and an *Iniquity* even in *Holy Things*, and in our *ſolemn meetings*, Iſaiah 1. 13. And yet this is the Nation that hopes and expects to be bleſſ'd and favour'd of God.

Pardon me, my Brethren, if I ſpeak with ſome more than ordinary freedom upon this Occaſion. *Theſe* are the Times that do call, you know, more particularly for it. What ſaith the Prophet at the firſt Verſe of the Chapter that is immediately before the Text. *Cry aloud, ſpare not, liſt up thy Voice like a Trumpet, and ſhew my People their Tranſgreſſion, and the Houſe of Jacob their Sins.* Obſerve, I entreat you, the *Contents* of the whole; for 'tis highly ſuitable to ſuch a ſeaſon as this; and would as much deſerve a Diſcourſe from it. 'The Prophet, ſay theſe, being ſent to reprove Hypocriſy, expreſſeth a *Counterfeit* Faſt and a *true* one. He declareth what Promiſes are due unto Godlineſs; and to the keeping of the Sabbath. After which in order follow the *Contents* of the Chapter

Chapter of the Text, *viz.* ' The damnable nature of Sin.
' The Sins of the Jews. Calamity is for Sin. Salvation is
' only of God. This saith the Word, This saith the Church,
This say all the Preachers and Ministers of it; and lastly,
this saith the Experience, the Reasons and Consciences of
Men.

Besides the *Lessons* that have this Day been appointed to be
read, the 5th Chapter of *Jeremiah* is in some regards worthy
our perusal upon this Solemnity. ' Thou hast stricken them,
' but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but
' they have refused to receive Correction, *v. 3.* But I shall
chiefly cite *v. 23, &c.* But this People hath a revolting and
Rebellious Heart, they are revolted and gone. Neither say
they in their Heart, let us now fear the Lord our God, that
giveth Rain, both the former and the latter in his Season: *that*
bestows indeed all Blessings upon us: Your Iniquities have turned
away these things, and your Sins have withholden good things
from you.

What then remains, but that we sincerely consider of these
great Truths: and as we tender the Favour of Almighty
God, present or future; the Pardon of our Sins; the welfare
of Her Majesties Person and Government; the Honour and
Security of our Holy Religion; the success of the Arms
of us and our Allies; and the lasting well-grounded Peace,
Safety, and Prosperity of these Kingdoms; with our Eternal
Interests in the Kingdom of God: I say, what remains, but
that as we tender any, or all of these, we do most devoutly
and solemnly this Day fast and humble our selves for our Sins
and Neglects, that we repent of them; and as wisely, and cheer-
fully resolve, with God's good Grace, to forsake and amend
them: that thus by this means *Wisdom and Knowledge*, Righ-
teousness and *the fear of the Lord may be the Glory and Stabi-*
lity of our Times: and that we may so faithfully serve him, and
so acceptably, in *this Life*, as to be made partakers of *his ever-*
lasting Glory in the Life to come.

I shall end all with *Psalms*. 30. 6, &c. as it is chiefly in our
Service Translation. ' And in my prosperity I said, I shall
' never be removed: Thou Lord of thy Goodness hast made my
' Hill so strong. So the Psalmist then a little too hastily con-
' cluded: But it presently therefore follows. Thou didst turn
thy face from me, thou didst *Hide* thy face from me, and I
was troubled. And what doth he resolve on, what doth he
do, in this his Trouble and Disappointment? It follows, ' Then
' Cried I unto thee, O Lord, and, in right humble manner,
' unto the Lord did I make my Supplication. Namely, Hear,

' O Lord, and have Mercy upon me, Lord, be thou my
' Helper, v. 11. as we do, and I hope, with some sincerity,
on this very Day; and that after some *Hidings of his Face* from
us. And God grant that through his great Goodness we may
be able at length to conclude also in the following Words.

' Thou hast turned my Heaviness into Joy: Thou hast put
' off my Sack-cloth, and girded me with Gladness. There-
' fore shall every good Man Sing of thy Praise without cea-
' sing: O my God, I will give Thanks unto thee for ever.
v. 12, 13.

Behold the Lords Hand is not shortned that it cannot save;
neither his Ear heavy that it cannot hear. But your Iniquities
have separated between you and your God, and your Sins
have hid his Face from you that he will not hear.

F I N I S.



*A Sermon preach'd before the Society for the Propagation
of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, at the Parish-Church
of St. Mary-le-Bow, February 21. 1707. By the Right
Reverend William, Lord Bishop of St. Asaph.*

*A Sermon preach'd before the Society for the Propagation
of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, at the Parish-Church of
St. Mary-le-Bow, February 20. 1708. By William Stan-
ley, D. D. Dean of St. Asaph.*

Both Sold by J. Downing in Bartholemew-Close.

